

The E-rate program could be greatly improved by simplifying the application process. Why can't libraries that are only applying for E-rate reimbursement for their telephone lines file ONE form instead of four? Deadlines are fuzzy, and the forms are never the same from year to year, so every form requires re-reading volumes of instructions. I don't know how the "estimated average burden hours" was calculated, but it grossly underestimates the actual amount of time required.

Another concern is that often acronyms or abbreviations are used in USAC correspondence, and there is no explanation anywhere in the correspondence as to what they mean. (For example, what is PIA? Nowhere in the letter does it tell me who or what PIA is!) Searching the E-rate web site for such a thing can take hours, and I know before I begin that there is a good chance I won't even find it.

I am an intelligent person, but E-rate has defeated me. I absolutely HATE filing. Every year I end up exasperated and demoralized. I've had numerous bad experiences including losing data online and having to start over; wasting hours trying to get a PIN number so I could certify online, only to learn that this could only be done in the midst of filing certain forms; denial of funding because of a date scrolling flaw in the web application. It never ends! I am so frustrated that after nine years of this bureaucratic baloney that I'm calling it quits. E-rate could have been a tremendous asset for small libraries, but the "reimbursement" does not begin to compensate for the stress filing causes or for the amount of time lost reading twenty or more pages of instructions or filling out endless forms.